

The Wooden Doors of Zanzibar

TEACHER: *Look closely at this photo. Can you tell what this is?*

STUDENT: *A door, a gate, a piece of furniture, etc.*

What you are looking at is part of a door. What part of the door do you see?

The top

You are correct. This is the top of the door. This door is very large, so we can only see the top half of it in the photo. It is the front door to a building. Does it look like the door on the front of our school, or the front door of your house?

No

What makes this door different?

It has decorations on it; it's really big; it is curved at the top; etc.

This door has a lot of features that make it very special. This photo was taken in a place called Zanzibar. Zanzibar is an island off the coast of Tanzania, in East Africa. What is an island?

Land with water around it

An island is a piece of land surrounded by water on all sides. Zanzibar is located in the Indian Ocean. People have been travelling to and from Zanzibar for thousands of years. Many people from India, Europe, the Middle East and other countries in Africa have made their home on the island. The largest city on the island is called Stone Town. Many of the buildings in Stone Town have beautiful doors, like the one in this picture. Why do you think people made their doors like this?

To look nice, to tell a story, to protect their homes

The doors were made like this for lots of different reasons. Many people from Persia, carved messages into their doors. Sometimes the messages welcomed people, or told them about the people who lived inside. Other people carved vine designs that they believed caught any evil spirits before they could enter the house. Some people carved pictures of animals, trees or flowers that told a story. Many of the doors have big or little metal spikes on them. Raise your hand if you can see the spikes on the door in the photo.

(Give the children a chance to look at the photo and raise their hands. Then point to the spikes.)

Can you guess why there are spikes on the front door of this building?

To keep people out; to look scary; etc.

Spikes on a front door do look a bit scary, and often will keep people from coming inside. The first people to put spikes on their doors were originally from a place in Asia called Punjab. A long time ago, when people were fighting there, they used elephants to knock down the doors of peoples' houses. If there were spikes on the doors, the elephants would not charge them, and the people were safe. There are no elephants in Zanzibar today, but people still like the look of the spikes, and think that it makes their homes safe from danger. Smaller spikes are sometimes added to doors just for decoration. Give a thumbs up if you would want spikes on your front door. Give a thumbs down if you wouldn't.

(Give kids a second to respond with their thumbs.)

There are almost 800 carved doors in Zanzibar. Some of them are hundreds of years old, and each one is unique. "Unique" means special or different. What do you notice about this door that makes it unique?

It has animals carved in it; it is very fancy; it has flowers, leaves, and vines; etc.

All of things you noticed about this door do make it unique. What makes it even more special, is that this door is handmade. What do you think this door is made from?

Wood, metal, etc.

This door is made from wood. If you look closely at the center of the door, you can see the lines of the wooden boards that have been joined together. What do you think the fancy decorations around the sides and top of the door are made from?

Wood, metal, etc.

Those decorations are also made of wood. Each little leaf, flower, vine and animal is hand carved from a piece of wood using a chisel. It took a very long time for someone to carve all of the details into this door.

When something is this special, it is a good idea to take care of it. The people of Zanzibar are trying to protect their doors, so they will be around for years to come. People come from all over the world to see the beautiful doors on this island. Some tourists (people who are visiting the island) like the doors so much, that they want to take a piece of the doors home with them. If everyone left with a piece of the doors, they would be gone. The old doors of Zanzibar need to be protected, so someday if you go to the island, you can see and enjoy them too!

Kindergarten Standards:

NYS Common Core Kindergarten Social Studies Standards

- K.2.b Cultures include traditions, beliefs, and shared values and ideas generally accepted by a particular group of people.
- K.2.c Children, families, and communities from different cultures all share some common characteristics, but also have specific differences which make them unique.
- K.9.a Children, families, and communities of today can be compared with those in the past.
- K.10.a People use folktales, legends, oral histories, and music to teach values, ideas, traditions, and important events from the past.

Kindergarten ELA Power NYSCCLS (ICSD Power Standards in Bold)

Reading Standards for Informational Text: Kindergarten

- **Integration and Knowledge of Ideas**
 - 7. With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the text in which they appear (e.g., what person, place, thing, or idea in the text an illustration depicts).**

Speaking and Listening Standards: Kindergarten

- **Comprehension and Collaboration**
 - 1. Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about *kindergarten topics and texts* with peers and adults in small and larger groups.**
 - a. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others and taking turns speaking about the topics and texts under discussion).**
 - b. Continue a conversation through multiple exchanges.**
 - c. Seek to understand and communicate with individuals from different cultural backgrounds.**
 2. Confirm understanding of a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media by asking and answering questions about key details and requesting clarification if something is not understood.
 - 3. Ask and answer questions in order to seek help, get information, or clarify something that is not understood.**
- **Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas**
 - 6. Speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly.**

Language Standards: Kindergarten

- **Vocabulary Acquisition and Use**
 - 6. Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts.**